

September 14, 2006
SGA Chapel
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Purpose: To encourage and challenge

Specific Purpose: To encourage and challenge future ministers to be servants of all.

Text: *Matthew 20:20-28*

Not So With You

Introduction:

A. Text Overview [NIV]

A Mother's Request

(20) Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

(21) "What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

(22) "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

(23) Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

(24) When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. (25) Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. (26) Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — (28) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

B. Notes about Text

1. Verse-specific

(20) Salome (the mother of James and John) kneeled before the Lord

(25) Gentiles – from *ethnos*, also can be translated 'pagans'

2. Text-general

Salome: James and John's mother, the wife of Zebedee

- Comes and *kneels down* before Jesus and asked a quite bold question.

Why did she ask such a thing of Jesus?

-- Matthew 19 fills us in on something Jesus previously said.

Peter asks Jesus what the disciples will get for following Him and leaving everything behind.

-- You will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel! (cf. Matthew 19:28). However, even here Jesus mentions the major lesson -- "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30).

Natural reaction of James & John -- WOW! Let's tell mom about this!

Natural reaction of Salome -- wanting the best for her sons.

She seems like a well-intentioned and righteous woman.

However, were James and John alone in their desire for grandeur? No -- verse 24 -- the rest of the disciples were filled with indignation. THEY wanted the best seats.

Jesus then calls them together and makes it clear that there is a wrong and right way to rule and lead.

First, Jesus mentions that we should not rule as the Gentile or pagan rulers...

B. Challenge

1. Don't be like the Gentile rulers

- They lord it over their subjects

We have an Augustinian City of God-like dichotomy here -- those of the world and those of the Kingdom. The world's priorities are a completely different set from those of Jesus' Kingdom.

KJV: dominion, authority

Example 1: Herod in Acts 13 -- "His voice is the voice of a god!" He didn't give glory to God, and he was eaten from the inside out by worms! Yikes! That would be a lame party, but I'm sure many people took note of the God of Heaven that day.

Example 2: Xerxes/Ahasuerus in the book of Esther -- 'Let's have a festival to celebrate my greatness...a 180-day festival, with a 7-day banquet following...'

Example 3: Pharaoh in Exodus, who made the Israelites' work of making bricks as hard as possible, and yet he wouldn't let God's people go.

-- Issue of pride: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

With many of these rulers, their lives revolved around themselves. The center of their life wasn't nearly God, but rather themselves and their legacy.

Jesus says, "Not so with you." We aren't to be like these worldly rulers.

2. Be a servant-leader like Jesus

- Jesus of all people had the right to brag. He could have come and said, "I'm the Son of God by whom God created the world. I'm the King of Kings, so get me a castle, the best in food and servants, and I will live as the King that I am!"

- Jesus didn't ask for a castle or a throne. He had no place to lay his head, even though He was the King of kings and Lord of lords. Instead of saying, "Wash my feet," he washed His disciples' feet.

- Instead of saying, "Because I'm so great, give me the best," Jesus promoted the message, 'I am the Son of God, and I will give you the best and show you the way of humility.' Yet Jesus is and will be exalted.

The contrast of dominion and authority is to that of 'minister' and 'servant.' Note that the latter are also part of a person's identity. You can't be "dominion," but you can be a "minister." You can't be "authority," but you can be a "servant." Being great in God's Kingdom requires that we are characterized by service, and it needs to be part of our identity.

- As James 4:10 states, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up!"

- This model of leadership is such a paradigm shift from what we'd normally think.
- 1 Corinthians 1 – God using the foolishness of the world to confound the wise.

Yet Jesus was our greatest servant, and He predicts the greatest act of love in history in this text (cf. Matthew 20:28).

And yet we, as current-day disciples of God, sometimes also miss the boat, just like the twelve disciples. We can so easily get wrapped up in selfish pride, keeping us from true service in love for our God. I want to especially encourage you, and if you want to close your eyes and/or meditate on these examples and passages, then that's great. I want to take some time to really focus on our ultimate servant-leader, Jesus Christ. Let us be servants, just as Jesus commanded His followers, in gladness, obedience, and love.

Here are several examples of Jesus' service:

- Physical, yet Miraculous Provision
 - The intro of Jesus' ministry, the miracle at Cana of Galilee of turning water into wine, physically saving the wedding.
 - The feeding of the 4000 and 5000, and the miraculous service, even with negligible resources, and the miracle involved in multiplying food.
 - Jesus casting out demons from various people, healing the sick, raising the dead.
- Promised Service
 - John 14:3 - And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
- Humility
 - Washing the disciples' feet, and His statement to the disciples in John 13:14, "You should also wash one another's feet."
 - Jesus coming as a man, being so humble as to be made in the likeness of man.
- But mainly...
 - His obedience to the Father in all things.
 - His cry, *It is Finished*, laying His life down for His friends, even as an innocent Lamb Sacrifice, in obedience to the Father's Will. Here, Jesus served us.

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." –
John 15:13

Jesus was our greatest servant, and let us obey in not ruling as the Gentiles, but rather being servants modeled after Him.